United Nations ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2018/14

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 February 2018

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

UNECE Executive Committee

Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

Twenty-fourth session
Geneva, 30 April and 1 May 2018
Item 7(c) of the provisional agenda
Recommendations and standards: Related issues for noting and information

Executive Guide on the Electronic Consignment Note

Summary

This document provides an executive guide to the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) electronic consignment note (e-CMR), with a view to helping governments, government agencies, industries and private companies to understand better how this standard can be used to improve the exchange of data.

This document is submitted to the twenty-fourth UN/CEFACT Plenary for noting.

GE.18-02213(E)

1802213

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. The Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) was developed in 1956. This convention standardizes contractual and carrier liability conditions of transporting goods by road in vehicles for reward if the origin and destination are in two different countries, and at least one of the countries is a contracting party. It has been acceded to by 55 states around the world, thus making the use of the CMR obligatory in these countries. In 1976, the International Road Union introduced a United Nations Layout Key aligned CMR Note template in cooperation with the International Chamber of Commerce. This road consignment note template was updated in 2007 and is now used by most, if not all, parties to contracts of carriage in CMR contracting countries.

2. The CMR Note is primarily used for commercial transport contract purposes (business-to-business) and is often used by law enforcement and customs authorities for checking the goods details and consignor/consignee/carrier information for clearance in cross-border trade, or additional information in different situations.

3. In 2008, an Additional Protocol on e-CMR was introduced to support paperless versions of the e-CMR Note. Though several pilot tests have been conducted in the subsequent years, there has not been an official standardized message format for the Electronic Consignment Note. In 2017, a United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business project developed a business requirements specification, core component e-CMR message structure and XML message standard.

II. Applications

4. The CMR note is used to accompany the transport of goods by road and is legally recognized in 55 states around the world. At present, 13 countries have ratified or acceded to the Additional Protocol on e-CMR. The electronic version, on the basis of the Additional Protocol on e-CMR, automates the documentary process. Instead of recapturing data from a paper document (which might produce errors) the data can be reused and integrated automatically in subsequent processes.

III. Benefits

5. Since 2017, there have been several proposals on how to format an e-CMR; however, no clear single standard has prevailed. If this point-to-point approach continues, then it is likely that transport operators will need to manage multiple electronic formats depending on the partners they work with. This would make the electronic version of the road consignment note more complicated and expensive to implement than the paper version. The UN/CEFACT e-CMR model, available free of charge, proposes a single standard format for this message which would resolve these issues, allowing companies to easily integrate the information.

IV. More information

- UNECE Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) of 19 May 1956

- Protocol to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) of 5 July 1978
- Additional Protocol to the CMR concerning the electronic consignment note (e-CMR) of 20 February 2008
- UN/CEFACT e-CMR Business Requirement Specification